

Healthy weight, healthy futures

Local government action to tackle
childhood obesity (update 2018)



Case studies

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Foreword

Childhood obesity is one of the biggest health challenges of the 21st century. At the start of primary school one in 10 children are obese and by the end, that has increased to one in five. If you include those who are overweight, the rates rise to a more than a fifth and a third respectively.

Those growing up in the most deprived communities are at the greatest risk. The chances of being obese are about twice that of those who live in the least deprived areas. It is an 'obesity gap' that has been getting wider over the past decade.

The data – compiled as part of the National Child Measurement Programme – suggests our approach in local government needs to be two-fold: not only should we be running population-wide interventions, but we also need to be intensively targeting those most at risk.

It is undoubtedly a challenge. But as the local examples in this report shows, it can be done. We are seeing councils up and down the country trying a host of innovative approaches.

This document updates the Local Government Association's (LGA) previous 'Healthy weight, healthy futures: Local government action to tackle childhood obesity' publication (February 2016)¹.

It showcases the wide variety of ways, and different partners, that the sector is working with their colleagues in planning to not only restrict takeaways, but also working proactively to ensure new developments take into account health and wellbeing. Some are focussing on getting children physically active and the latest figures suggest less than one in four children are achieving the required levels.

Meanwhile, others are concentrating on food and diet. In doing so, they are forging important partnerships with early years settings, schools, community groups and local businesses. But the evidence from councils suggests we should be prepared to be tough too. Liverpool City Council has taken on the food industry, by naming and shaming products that are high in sugar.

What comes across loud and clear is that if we are going to make progress as a nation on obesity – the best we can say at the moment is that rates are no longer rising in the way they were. The solution lies in developing a whole-system approach and that should now be our priority.

Two years ago the Government published its child obesity strategy, promising in the next decade obesity rates will start to fall. Steps are being taken at a national level and the introduction of the levy on sugary drinks this year is an example of that.

But the success of the drive will rest and fall on what is done on a local level. If we succeed, the benefits will be felt for generations to come.

Obese and overweight children are more likely to suffer low self-esteem and anxiety. As they get older and move into adulthood, obesity leads to a higher risk of a whole host of health problems from type 2 diabetes and cancer to heart disease. We must act now.

Councillor Izzie Seccombe OBE

Chairman, LGA Community Wellbeing Board

¹ <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/healthy-weight-healthy-fu-2f9.pdf>

1. Bedfordshire Local Authorities: How a social enterprise has innovated on weight management

BeeZee Bodies is a thriving weight management service. It started out being run by Bedford Borough Council but has since become a social enterprise. It now provides services to three local authorities and a fourth has just come on board. The results it achieves are impressive.

The challenge

Like many local authorities, Bedford Borough Council set up its own family weight management scheme over a decade ago when there was growing concern about the rising rates of obesity.

The service – BeeZee Bodies – was launched in 2006 thanks to a combination of Sport England, local authority and public health funding. It was offered to families with overweight children aged five to 15. The service was achieving good results, seeing about 80 families a year. But with budgets tight, it became clear there was limited scope for growth.

The solution

The decision was taken in 2012 to move BeeZee Bodies out of council control through the creation of a community interest company (CIC) and subsequently a limited company run with the same control as the CIC. Since then it has grown in both scope and size. The move to become a private organisation has allowed the delivery of the family education services (BZ Families) and the delivery of child and adult weight management services. It has also led to the service bidding for and winning other local authority contracts. Currently it provides BeeZee Families to Hertfordshire County Council and BeeZee Bumps in Luton as well as full delivery of innovative services in Brighton and Hove.

There are three 17-week programmes covering different age groups – five to eight, seven to 11 and 12 to 15 – incorporating physical activity, healthy eating and transformative change. This involves making structural changes to the physical environment and dealing with conflict to enable the best results.

Children get to take part in a diverse range of activities, from basketball to canoeing.

On graduation from the programme, families are supported via social media networks and there is the option of follow-up appointments when families are re-weighed and measured at six months and one year post-programme. Alongside the family service – re-branded BeeZee Families – there is now BeeZee Bumps for pregnant women, BeeZee Ladies, BeeZee Mums and Gutless for men.

Chief Executive Stuart King, who set up the service back in 2006, said: “There is a lot of learning to be done setting out on your own, but it does give you that little extra creative freedom. Take the name Gutless, for example, it is not something I think we could have done if we were a council service but the language you use and the way you appeal to people is really important when you are dealing with changing lifestyles.”

Impact

Each of the courses have proved to be popular. More than 350 families have been through BeeZee Families across Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire over the past year.

Three-quarters of those who started it completed the programme and graduated, while 88 per cent saw a reduction in their BMI.

Eighty-one per cent of families agreed they would be more likely to do physical activities in the future as a result of attending and 98 per cent said it increased their confidence in making healthy choices.

One of the families who have been helped is Chris and his 11-year-old son. They were referred to the service after Chris lost his wife to cancer. He said both he and his son have been bullied for being overweight and after being widowed, he had little inclination or idea about what to cook: “My son called me Captain Birds Eye.”

But after he started attending the weekly sessions, he began to make “considerable progress” in regards to food choices, cooking, portion sizes and exercise. “The BeeZee team are so helpful,” he said. “They don’t appear to judge you. My son and I now work well as a team, encouraging each other to keep up our healthy living.”

Muriel Scott, Director of Public Health for Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils, is full of praise for the work BeeZee Bodies do. “It is an innovative team which is able to flex its programmes in response to local needs. For BeeZee Bodies, it isn’t just about losing weight, the staff use behavioural psychology to understand individuals’ barriers and motivators and achieve positive sustainable change. They are passionate about using technology to enhance the reach of their services and enable long-term peer support among clients.”

Lessons learned

As the service has progressed, Mr King said there has been a growing emphasis on behavioural science.

“We deal with things like conflict resolution and relationship support. You have to look at the social circumstances. If someone is having relationship problems in the family, there is probably very little you can achieve by spending several weeks just teaching them about healthy eating and encouraging them to be active without addressing the underlying issue.

“That is why our courses are a bit longer than many. It takes time to build trust and get to know someone so we spend quite a bit of time discussing things. We call it the chatty bit of the sessions. You need that as well as the diet and physical activity elements.”

But Mr King said you also have to be prepared to have tough conversations at times. “People are really bad at predicting the things that genuinely affect their behaviour, with most decisions being habitual and automatic, largely based on the physical infrastructure around you and the people you associate with. It is also common for people to exaggerate what they have achieved in terms of activity they have completed or types and amounts of food they have consumed. It is a really difficult thing to do, but sometimes you have to call them out. It can upset them – and this is where the trust that we build up is important.”

How is the approach being sustained?

BeeZee Bodies is expanding all the time. It has just been given a contract to provide all its programmes in Brighton. The services will start in April and is leading the recruitment of 10 more staff.

Mr King sees this as just the start. “When people engage with our amazing team, we are genuinely helping them to take control and change their lives. We are exploring commercial contracts and want to increase our reach through innovative, state of the art marketing in terms of both getting more people to take part in our programmes and moving into new areas.”

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2. Blackburn with Darwen Council: Training staff to help tackle weight issues in the early years

Blackburn with Darwen Council's public health team is working with academics to develop an online training course for staff who work with pre-school children. The resource aims to teach them to provide advice and support on weight issues. Piloting has started and the early indications are that it has huge potential.

The challenge

During the pre-school years, there is what could be called a gap in knowledge when it comes to tackling weight issues.

Between the ages of two and four, children come into contact with staff who are not necessarily fully trained to broach or advise on the subject. Before that they have regular contact with health visitors, while afterwards they are in the school system.

Following prompting from a local GP, Dr Nabil Isaac, who had struggled to tackle the issue with one of his patients and their child, Blackburn with Darwen Council decided to explore what could be done to help in the early years.

The council's public health team approached academics from Liverpool John Moores University and the University of Salford as they had run a successful weight management programme in Liverpool some years previously.

The remit was to look at helping both those who were overweight and also those who were underweight as Blackburn has above average rates of both.

The solution

A PhD student, Daisy Bradbury, has been funded by Liverpool John Moores University and Blackburn with Darwen Council to carry

out a three-year research project into helping early years staff.

The work started in 2015 and has been divided into three phases. The first phase involved in-depth interviews taking place with front-line staff, including health visitors, GPs, public health managers and children centre workers, which was followed by a wider survey.

Dr Paula Watson, Senior Lecturer at Liverpool John Moores University and principal investigator for the project, said this showed there were some serious shortcomings in knowledge. "It became clear people did not know where to refer to, what they should be saying and whose responsibility this was. Health visitors were referring to GPs and GPs were referring to health visitors – there was no consistency. They were not using BMI even though it is recommended by The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health.

"But it also showed there was an appetite to do something. These are people who want to help so we knew we had to do something to help develop their abilities."

This research was followed by a trip to the US where an online resource had been introduced for school staff and this led on to phase two, the development and testing of an online training resource that was bespoke to pre-school children and relevant for the UK.

A working group was set up of health visitors, GPs, children's centre staff and public health specialists to co-produce the online resource and by the end of 2017, a working version had been created.

Dr Watson said the skills of each complemented each other. “While academics brought evidence and behaviour change theory, local practitioners and service managers were crucial in informing what would work on the ground.”

The impact

The piloting of the resource – phase three – began in January 2018. A GP practice, children’s centre and health visiting team have all volunteered to take part and had two months to complete all the modules.

There are eight in total covering:

- communicating with parents about child weight
- behavioural change techniques
- unhealthy weight at pre-school
- identifying unhealthy weight
- nutrition
- physical activity and sedentary behaviour
- culture
- roles and responsibilities.

Dr Isaac, whose Cornerstone Practice is taking part, said it is already proving a “valuable resource”. “It provides all the necessary information, educational material and training to deal with the unhealthy weight of our pre-school children, including the necessary skill of communication with parents to approach the weight issue sensitively in a non-judgemental way.” Meanwhile, an early years worker at Livesey Children’s Centre said: “I found the modules informative and easy to read and understand. I feel watching the videos demonstrated how to approach parents about weight management with a solution focused approach.”

Lessons learned

Dr Watson said one of the aims of this project was to create something that can be sustained and incorporated into the working practices long-term. “We ran a successful child weight management intervention in Liverpool called Goals that worked with

families. It ran for seven years and improved year-on-year, but because funding is tight it was decommissioned. So this time we wanted to create something that would not be so susceptible to that happening given the current funding climate.

“By co-producing the intervention with front-line staff and embedding the skills and knowledge within existing infrastructures, we hope it can make a real difference to the health of children in Blackburn.”

How is the approach being sustained?

Once the pilot is completed, the findings will be evaluated before a decision is taken out on further roll out. If it is successful, the hope is that it will be made available to all staff working with children in the early years.

But it may not stop there. With a little tweaking, the modules could also be made applicable to staff who work with school-age children.

Blackburn with Darwen Council Public Health Specialist Shirley Goodhew said she is excited about the project. “The e-learning resource has the potential to increase knowledge and skills in communication and behaviour change and build capacity across universal services to enable them to be confident to offer timely, consistent and appropriate advice and support for parents.”

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3. Blackpool Council: The benefits of making a high-profile commitment to fighting obesity

Local government declarations have already been used successfully in areas such as smoking and tobacco control, Blackpool Council broke new ground when it signed up to a commitment on healthy weight. Since it was agreed two years ago, a host of new projects have begun giving the fight against obesity a new impetus.

The challenge

Blackpool has high rates of overweight and obese residents. More than a quarter of four and five-year-olds and 40 per cent of 10 and 11-year-olds fall into those categories. Among adults, nearly three-quarters are overweight or obese.

The council has run a variety of different schemes to tackle the problem from a healthy weight management service for children to a healthy food awards for local businesses, but to varying degrees of success.

Back in 2015, the public health team decided it wanted to look at organising a more co-ordinated response and give the healthy weight drive added impetus. As a solution, Blackpool started exploring signing a local government declaration on healthy weight.

The declaration was developed by Food Active, the regional weight campaign commissioned by councils in the northwest, and was based on the model developed in other areas of public health such as smoking and tobacco control.

The solution

After receiving backing from the council's corporate leadership team, the declaration was signed in January 2016. In doing so Blackpool became the first council in the

country to take such a step. Others have since followed suit.

The health and wellbeing board and the public health team have taken the lead in pushing forward with the declaration and that has led to a number of developments:

- the healthy food awards for local takeaways and restaurants has been rebranded to make it more user-friendly for businesses
- a new family-based weight management service, Making Changes, has been launched and is run by the leisure service
- the successful 'Give Up Loving Pop' (GULP) campaign run in secondary schools that sees pupils pledge to go fizzy drinks-free has been extended into primary schools
- public health and the council's catering team have been working with schools and parents to help provide children with healthy, nutritious packed lunches.

Blackpool Senior Public Health Practitioner Nicky Dennison said: "It has given us the chance to really have a think about what we were doing and get our house in order. It is a very public commitment, which encourages all the council departments to think about what role they have to play in this.

"For example, we are currently in discussion with the planning team about how we can use the system to do more to start placing restrictions on takeaways and maybe supermarkets and convenience stores."

The impact

An evaluation published last year looking at what has been done since the declaration

was signed hailed the initiative for “making significant progress”.

It is easy to see why. The healthy food award has just been given out to its 100th recipient, compared to the 14 who got the previous version.

The extension of GULP into primary schools saw 1,600 children take part last year with the winning school going pop-free for a cumulative total of 498 days. Blackpool Public Health Director Arif Rajpura said he is delighted with what has been happening. “We’ve recognised that a community that’s unwell and reliant on lots of services is a drain on resources and a drain on the economy so to have a healthy, resilient population will help us with our other objective of regenerating Blackpool. As a consequence of signing the declaration, there is more of a cognisance, an awareness of healthy weight and the issues around healthy weight.”

But the success of the push can also be seen in the individual stories that have emerged. Ashley Naughton, 11, started swimming lessons while taking part in the Making Changes programme and loved it so much he continued the sport with the local Polar Bears club. He ended up competing in the 2018 national championships for children with additional needs and won gold in the 50m freestyle race.



Lessons learned

As with any major push involving a range of different partners, keeping momentum going is important. To help achieve this, Blackpool has been organising summits for partners.

Four have been held in the past year with the most recent organised as a celebration. More than 80 people attended the event at the Winter Gardens where a healthy afternoon tea was served. “You need to recognise what has been achieved,” said Ms Dennison. “Energy can flag, but we have found it is invaluable to bring everyone together. You get people sharing best practice and making connections that may not happen otherwise.”

How is the approach being sustained?

Over the past year, attention has turned towards getting other public sector organisations to make their own declarations.

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust signed up in April 2017 and since then have made a number of steps, including stocking fruit on food trolleys that go around wards and increasing the healthy food options in vending machines and the canteen.

Trust Deputy Chief Executive Tim Bennett said: “The connection between obesity and life-threatening illnesses such as heart disease, type two diabetes and cancer is now apparent according to research and we are committed to working hard to make our staff and patients healthier.”

The local clinical commissioning group and the police are also considering making their own declarations.

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4. Bradford Council: Encouraging healthier takeaways

Trading standards and public health are working together in Bradford to run the Good Food Award for takeaways. More than 100 have achieved the standard by making changes such as offering healthier options and reducing the salt, fat and sugar content of some of the most popular dishes.

The challenge

Bradford has the highest rate of obesity in Year six children in Yorkshire and the Humber and the joint 17th highest rate in England, excluding London boroughs.

Upon leaving primary school, 23.7 per cent of children in Bradford are obese, 14.3 per cent are overweight, and 4.8 per cent are severely obese – a total of more than 42 per cent.

Those from the poorest backgrounds are particularly susceptible. Obesity rates in the most deprived areas are two and a half times greater than they are in the least deprived. Takeaways are a popular source of food for eating out. The city has 110 takeaways per 100,000 people, much higher than the national average of 80.

The solution

Bradford has set up a project, Good Food Bradford, to work with takeaways and other hot food outlets to encourage them to adopt healthier practices. The project started in 2013 and is a joint partnership between West Yorkshire Trading Standards and the council's public health team.

The award focuses on businesses having a good standard of hygiene, trading fairly and offering healthier options to customers. There are three levels – bronze, silver and gold. To achieve each, certain requirements

in terms of the content and preparation of the food have to be met.

Bronze requires takeaways and hot food outlets to make small changes behind the scenes, such as offering thicker rather than thin chips and using reduced fat, salt or sugar items in cooking.

For silver, the shops need to promote and highlight healthier options to customers and lower the salt content of meals, while gold is given to those that go that extra mile by offering healthier children's meals or having their dishes nutritionally tested.

There are other elements to the project too. To help businesses, training courses are offered to help them make adjustments to their ingredients, cooking methods and preparation.

The Good Food team has also been into schools and run workshops with children and parents in a separate initiative to encourage healthy eating.

The impact

Over 100 takeaways and hot food outlets have achieved the Good Food Award with 30 joining up in the past year alone.

Another 10 to 20 businesses are completing the training each year. Public health Nutritionist Amy Lamond, who runs the health side of the project, said: "Something like this does take time. You have to expect knock backs and people to say they are not interested, but we have been impressed with how the takeaways and shops have engaged with it.

“Most are willing to do something, they just need a bit of help. Little steps can make a huge difference. For example, we have given out salt-shakers with just five holes – some places were using ones with many more. We know most people just shake two or three times so that can have a major impact on salt intake.”

Lessons learned

Miss Lamond said face to face contact is essential. “There is no point sending emails and letters, they will just be ignored,” she said. “You have to get out and get into the shops. But you have to pick your time. There is no point turning up when it is busy. I have found the cafés have a quiet spell between 10am and 11am, while with takeaways your best bet is 2pm to 3pm before the after school rush or before 6pm when it gets busy for the evening.

“I go in and find the best approach is to start talking about what is on their menu. If you can also stress how it may help them save money, that also helps. For example, good oil maintenance can mean they don’t have to change the oil as much. as well as improving the quality of their products.”

How is the approach being sustained?

Over the last six months, the partnership has introduced a ‘pledges’ scheme.

This is largely aimed at those businesses that would not normally qualify for the Good Food Award.

These include cafés in gyms, nurseries and play centre food counters and community centres. Miss Lamond said: “We have encouraged them to take steps such as display calorie information or offer deals with low sugar drinks rather than the high sugar ones which is normally the case.

“It is a way of getting more places involved. So far we have 70 signed up. They get a certificate and sticker like the businesses who do the award and we promote them on our website as well as on social media.”

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5. Bristol City Council: Running a Sugar Smart campaign

Bristol was the first city to become part of the Sugar Smart movement. It has had great success in engaging partners, such as universities, banks and the local water company.

The challenge

There is growing concern about sugar intake, particularly among children. And Bristol is no different. A survey carried out by the city council found around two-thirds of adults who responded were worried about the sugar content of food with child obesity the major concern, followed by tooth decay and diabetes.

Locally, over half of adults and a third of pupils in the last year of primary school are obese or overweight. Meanwhile, a quarter of five-year-olds have tooth decay. Mayor of Bristol, Marvin Rees said: “Eating too much sugar is contributing to rising obesity levels and dental problems, which are two significant factors linked to health inequalities in Bristol. We must address this if we want our city to be a fairer place where health and wellbeing is improving.”

The solution

Bristol became the first city to sign up to Sugar Smart, the sugar reduction campaign supported by Jamie Oliver and Sustain and pioneered in Brighton. It has been led by the council’s public health team after input from Bristol Youth Council which debated the merits of the scheme in late 2016.

The two-year programme was launched in January 2017 with an initial budget of £9,000, although over time partner organisations have given in kind support of much greater value.

The launch took place at Ashton Gate stadium over the course of a weekend when there were national rugby and football matches. Players wore branded t-shirts and the programme was advertised on the big screens in the stadium.

The public health team has incorporated Sugar Smart messages into the Bristol Eating Better Awards for restaurants, takeaways and cafés and the healthy schools awards have included Sugar Smart lesson materials and assembly plans. But the scheme has also been based on working with external partners, such as local businesses and public sector organisations, to get the message out to the public.

To help, Jamie Oliver’s Food Revolution ambassador, Fi Argent, volunteered to work with the public health team and support the programme.

Ms Argent said: “My role has been to get out there talking to local businesses and groups to get them taking part. You have to look at what their motivation is and explain why Sugar Smart is important. Having Jamie Oliver’s name attached to the movement is important though, it does open doors.”

The impact

In the first 12 months, the scheme has had great success in engaging local partners.

The programme has worked with the two local universities which have promoted being Sugar Smart to their students via social media and at sports events they run.

And one of the universities, the University of the West of England, has even reduced the price of bottled water at its outlets and increased the price of fizzy drinks.

Lloyds Banking Group in the city has banned fizzy drinks from its staff canteens, and the two hospital trusts in the city have been promoting the importance of sugar reduction to staff.

Meanwhile, Bristol Water has showcased Sugar Smart messages in its newsletter 'Water Talk' sent out to 500,000 customers, while its award-winning water bar has been touring local festivals and events offering people free refills of their water bottles.

Lessons learned

Social media has formed an important part of Bristol's work so far, said Wendy Parker, the council's Public Health Principal. "I think that is one of the most important lessons – the need to work differently if you want to reach out to young people. You can't rely on the traditional way of working."

One of the most successful examples of this approach was a YouTube film called Thirsty Eyes. It was an animated film with reworked lyrics from the Dirty Dancing song 'Hungry Eyes', which set out the dangers of consuming too many fizzy drinks.

"It was so popular," said Ms Parker. "The film was watched more than 70,000 times in the city and we are now encouraging its use in dental waiting rooms."

How is the approach being sustained?

As it enters the second year, the focus is going to shift towards improving cooking skills. The idea is to equip young people to be able to cook a week's worth of meals from scratch. "We want to promote it as a basic life skill," said Ms Parker. "We have already got the Girl Guides on board and we are talking to the Scouts. We will also be doing something in schools as well. We want it to have a major impact in the way young people think about food. If they are cooking it from fresh ingredients, they know exactly what is going into it."

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6. Calderdale Council: Working with local eateries

Calderdale Council has worked with the Soil Association's Out to Lunch team to create a local version of their national initiative. It is giving the public information about where they can go to get healthy meals and encouraging local restaurants and cafés to adopt better practices.

The challenge

Restaurants, cafés and pubs increasingly have an important role to play in influencing what children and their families regard as good food, especially when it comes to the treat of going out to eat.

Research shows that around 40 per cent of parents now eat out with their children at least once a fortnight.

But 66 per cent of parents say they do not think children's food in restaurants is good enough.

The Soil Association's Out to Lunch campaign is addressing this at a national level, using a network of secret diners to review national chains to see how healthy and sustainable their food is and then working with groups such as Wetherspoons, Strada and TGI Friday's to improve their menu options. But historically the campaign has not worked directly with smaller, independent eateries.

The solution

Calderdale's public health team already had a close working relationship with the Soil Association through the local Food for Life Awards programme and the Big Lottery-funded Food for Life Better Care project, which aims to improve food in care settings.

Following on from the success of the national Out to Lunch campaign, Calderdale became

the first local authority to commission it on a local scale.

With the help of 20 local secret diner families and a coordinator supplied by Out to Lunch, 20 local cafés, pubs and restaurants nominated by parents were surveyed. The secret diners used the same criteria that is used nationally – looking for evidence of fresh food being used, choice of healthy options and family-friendly practices.

The reviews found that a number of Calderdale's independent eateries were actually doing better than some of the national restaurant chains. Italian restaurant Prego, in Brighouse, took the number one spot, outperforming chains in the national survey, including ASK Italian, Nando's, Zizzi and Las Iguanas, with its family-friendly atmosphere, healthy choices and fresh produce. Other eateries were praised for substituting chips for healthier options and offering a great range of meat-free choices with lots of vegetables.

The top 10 restaurants and cafés are now listed on Calderdale Food for Life website with details of what they offer. Out to Lunch Coordinator Hattie Shepherd said: "It's brilliant to see that families in Calderdale have access to high quality children's food from some of their local restaurants, cafés and pubs.

"We found a great diversity of good food with the top 10 including Italian and Indian restaurants, local pubs and family friendly cafés. However, there is still room for improvement – many of the cafés and restaurants we surveyed could do more to support children and families to eat well."

Calderdale Director of Public Health Paul Butcher agrees – and said the scheme is

perfectly positioned to help. “We know that there is some great children’s food available in Calderdale, and some that is not up to scratch. This will support parents to make informed decisions about where best to eat, and will encourage local restaurants to improve their children’s menu.”

The impact

The campaign is having the biggest impact where weaknesses have been highlighted by working with the eateries to improve practices.

The review found only three of the 20 eateries surveyed served a portion of vegetables with every children’s meal, and only four included and promoted fruit on their children’s pudding menus.

And, surprisingly, considering they offer children’s menus, seven of the eateries did not offer baby changing facilities and one did not have any high chairs available.

A toolkit has been offered to the local restaurants, cafés and pubs, and Food for Life local programme specialists are working directly with some to improve standards.

Out to Lunch’s recommendations include:

- serve two portions of vegetables with every child’s meal
- ensure children’s puddings are an appropriate portion size
- make water freely available and stop promoting sugary drinks to children
- offer children’s portions of adult dishes
- offer quality ingredients such as free range and organic on the children’s menu
- provide children’s cutlery as standard
- make breastfeeding mums feel welcome.

Ms Shepherd said: “You always get a mixed reaction and some are more receptive than others. But already we are seeing some progress with restaurants making changes.

“Simple steps can make a huge difference. Making sure you are offering water instead

of fizzy drinks or offering smaller plates of adult meals is often an easy way of ensuring you offer children more options than just chicken nuggets and chips.”

Lessons learned

Unlike the national campaign, the local scheme did not take the step of naming and shaming the worst offenders. “We’re committed to working in collaboration with restaurants and eateries to improve the food they serve to children,” said Ms Shepherd. “Our aim isn’t to criticise and focus on the negatives, but to work in practical collaboration with eateries to improve their menus. We felt it would be better to create a positive atmosphere around the campaign. If we had started naming and shaming it could have turned businesses against the scheme.”

How is the approach being sustained?

Calderdale Council is hoping to extend the scheme in the future and carry out another review of restaurants, cafés and pubs, catching up with those who took part in 2017 and including more that were not part of the survey the first time. The national Out to Lunch team is also keen to work in other areas on the local model. “I think it has proved to be a really effective way of reaching those small, independent places that would never be captured by the national campaign. We could well do more in the future,” added Ms Shepherd.

The Out to Lunch scoring criteria and methodology can be downloaded from the Soil Association website: www.soilassociation.org/outtolunch.

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7. Carlisle City Council: Working with schools and young people

Carlisle's local strategic partnership works closely with schools and children to tackle obesity. It has been running a healthy eating programme in schools in recent years and is now planning a major sugar reduction drive.

The challenge

Carlisle has higher than average rates of diabetes and obesity. Over 35 per cent of children in Year six are recorded as obese or overweight. Poor diet is also a cause of high levels of dental decay.

But as a World Health Organisation-designated Healthy City, Carlisle has pledged to do something about this.

Three years ago, the Carlisle Plan 2015-2018 was launched, calling for a concerted effort to tackle the inequalities in health.

The key body responsible for meeting the challenge is the local strategic partnership, the Carlisle Partnership, which is hosted by Carlisle City Council and aims to pull key strategic partners together to tackle the most challenging issues across the district.

The solution

Schools and children have become key partners. Each year the Carlisle Partnership runs an event held in the council's civic centre chamber, where representatives from primary school councils debate a key posed question and discuss what changes they would like to see locally.

Partnership Manager Emma Dixon said: "It is really great to see the youth of Carlisle and our future generation, so actively engaged and full of energy and ideas. The children do presentations, hold debates and help design posters. It is good for councillors to get a different perspective from children and good for

children to get engaged in decision making.

"They come with all sorts of ideas and perspectives. Last year they talked about having green gyms and the council is now in the process of introducing some into their parks and green spaces. Other partners have also recognised the importance for green gyms, including the community group Harraby Together We Can and parish councils, and are working to install their own equipment.

"The school children also suggested an alternative to an ice-cream van – a van that brings fruit and vegetable snacks around the local community!"

Many of the schemes and projects that do get the green light often involve close working with young people. An established example is PhunkyFoods. Since 2015, the programme has been working with Carlisle Partnership and 22 local primary schools to help educate children and their families to live a healthier lifestyle.

PhunkyFoods delivers key healthy eating, physical activity and emotional wellbeing messages for children. It does this by adopting a lively, cross-curricular approach to teaching healthy lifestyles through art, music, drama and a real 'hands on' approach to food. The project includes training, resources and support to inspire teaching and learning with innovative ideas in healthy lifestyles.

A local coordinator has been employed to help schools in developing a whole-school approach to healthy lifestyle education, including parent engagement through workshops and cook and eat sessions.

The impact

PhunkyFoods has proved incredibly popular. More than 100 Carlisle teaching staff have

received training with 100 per cent of those trained reporting that it has increased their confidence in the delivery of lifestyle messages to their pupils.

Nearly 90 per cent of Carlisle schools involved in the programme also agree that, as a direct result of the programme, they deliver healthy lifestyle messages to their pupils more frequently than they used to. Schools also say it is having a direct impact on the behaviour of their pupils.

Nikki Hall, a teacher at Kingmoor Nursery and Infant School, said: “Since starting PhunkyFoods, our pupils have increased in their ability to carry out basic cooking skills such as cutting, spreading and weighting.

“They are more aware of healthy eating choices and their knowledge and understanding of key healthy eating messages, such as five-a-day and the healthy eating plate, have improved ten-fold.”

The result of this, she said, is that children are now more willing to try new foods at lunch times. “More children are attempting to eat salad and vegetables.

“Savoury recipes completed in class are sent home to parents so that learning can be shared and homework which encourages children to try out basic cooking skills at home has also been a great success.”

Lessons learned

Across all elements of the work and the projects highlighted, partnership working has been key to the success, said Ms Dixon.

“Even though budgets are tight, we look at what you can achieve by working together. When you use a whole-system approach and work in partnership, the benefits and impact can be much greater. Everyone has a role to play.

“As a result of discussion and awareness raised by the children, we have had offers of support and help from the local football association, leisure centres and workplaces to name just a few.

“The local college is also involved – a group

of students have made some exceptional videos on the projects to help raise awareness. Not only has this added value to the projects, but provided real life practical experience for the students.”

She said it was important to try to unlock other sources of funding. PhunkyFoods, for example, is funded in Carlisle by Nestlé Healthy Kids UK as the company has a factory site in the area.

The partnership has also secured funding from the Sustainable Food Cities Network, Sustain and the Rotary Club for its latest initiative, Sugar Smart.

How is the approach being sustained?

Work to roll out Sugar Smart, a national initiative supported by Sustain, began in the summer of 2017 and a coordinator has now been appointed.

Sugar Smart was the key theme of the recent primary school council event and posters, presentations and resources are now being developed for schools, shaped by the children’s ideas.

The aim of the project is to raise awareness of hidden sugars, the impact too much sugar can have on health and to get local businesses and organisations to sign up to pledges to help reduce sugar consumption and drive the project forward.

Councillor Lee Sherriff, the council’s Portfolio Holder for Communities, Health and Wellbeing, said it should help make a real difference. “Excessive consumption of sugary drinks and food is a major problem. Launching Sugar Smart in Carlisle means we can work together to make the district a healthier place for all residents and help individuals make informed choices.”

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8. Cheshire East Council: Putting the health visitor and school nursing service at the heart of the fight against obesity

Cheshire East Council has created an integrated zero to 19 service which sees health visitors co-located in children's centres and school nurses to provide an all year round service. One of the key priorities is to drive down obesity rates and it seems to be working.

The challenge

When responsibility for the under fives and health visitors was transferred across to local government in 2015, Cheshire East Council wanted to use it as an opportunity to address obesity as well as other health and social issues.

Like the rest of the country, the council was concerned about the number of children who were not a healthy weight.

An integration board was established, chaired by the cabinet member with responsibility for children, to decide the best way to proceed.

The solution

The council took the decision to develop an integrated zero to 19 children's services.

It led to health visitors, children's social workers and early years staff working in combined teams and co-located at children's centres, making it easier for parents to seek advice.

The council has also expanded the school nursing service so it is now moving towards a 52 week a year service rather than just operating in term times.

School nurses are also tasked with carrying out needs assessments at each school, highlighting the priority areas whether that be mental health, obesity or oral health.

Cheshire East consultant in public health Dr Carl Griffin said: "It means each school has a clear idea of where it needs to prioritise its efforts. The school nurses can then help them respond to it – and the fact they will be there all year round to give advice to teachers, parents and children is obviously a benefit."

The work in schools and children's centres is combined with wider support aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of families and children, which the council commissions from leisure provider EveryBody Sport and Recreation.

The provider runs a 12-week Let's Get Movin' programme for children and families where at least one child is over a healthy weight. The course includes a range of activities and interactive workshops. EveryBody Sport also runs a host of other activities open to the general population, from Nordic walking and walking football to subsidised gym membership and personal training.

The impact

Overall, the majority of the National Child Measurement Programme indicators are improving.

The proportion of children in reception (78.7 per cent) and Year six (69.2 per cent) who have a healthy weight when measured is increasing, while the proportion of children in reception (8.3 per cent) and Year six (15.4 per cent) who are obese is decreasing. It means Cheshire East is out-performing all the other areas in the northwest.

Dr Griffin said: "It is pleasing and I think it shows our approach is having an effect. When health visiting came across to local government, the school nursing contract was

also up so it was a real opportunity to have a look at what we were doing.

“But it is much more complex than saying it is down to one certain scheme. You also have to factor in the impact of the national programmes. The emphasis on sugar reduction and the 400-600-600 eating guidelines all make people more aware of what they need to do to maintain a healthy weight. It is a whole collection of things.”

Lessons learned

While the picture is positive, there are significant differences across the borough. Data on the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) can be estimated at an electoral ward level and it suggests there is a two-fold difference in the prevalence of excess weight between communities, ranging from around 12 per cent in Knutsford to more than 24 per cent in Macclesfield South.

The gap is ever greater for obesity, with the data suggesting a three-fold difference from 3.4 per cent in Wilmslow Lacey Green to 11.1 per cent in Macclesfield South and 11.5 per cent in Crewe East.

“It shows you have to understand the needs of your population,” said Dr Griffin. “We have pockets of high deprivation and what we have done is put more people on the ground so we can provide more support.”

How is the approach being sustained?

The contracts for the zero to 19 service and leisure service are only halfway through so next year attention will start to turn towards what should happen next.

Dr Griffin said: “We try to create some stability by handing out four to five-year contracts so as we get to next year, we will be evaluating the work that has been done and looking at what steps to take after that.”

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9. London Borough of Croydon: Getting schools food healthy

Croydon took part in the two-year Mayor of London's Food Flagship programme, designed to create healthy attitudes to food. Much of the work was focussed on schools and that now continues as the council has carried on funding the work.

The challenge

Croydon Council identified schools as a key partner in the fight against obesity.

The borough was chosen to be one of London's Food Flagship boroughs in 2014.

Over the course of the two-year initiative, more than £500,000 was invested in local projects to promote healthy eating, as the council match-funded investment from the Mayor of London.

Through the programme, community cooking and gardening schemes were supported, and training provided for local start-up food businesses. However, a key element of the programme was working with schools.

Public Health Principal Ashley Brown said: "One of the things that had become clear was that we could do better in the way we were promoting food in schools. For example, breakfast clubs had become very popular, but not all schools were providing healthy food as much as they could."

The solution

Throughout the programme, the council adopted a two-pronged approach – intensive work with a small group of schools combined with more general support for all. This was co-ordinated by a dedicated school food improvement officer, Laura Flanagan.

School staff were offered training in everything from improving the quality of

school meals and breakfast club menus, to making sure there were opportunities for cooking, and incorporating food into the curriculum.

Meanwhile, three schools were chosen to become flagship schools, with the aim of transforming their approach – and then spreading the good practice learned. They received funding for individual projects – all three schools worked with Trees for Cities to build an 'edible playground' involving raised beds, allotment style food-growing areas, greenhouses and a complete irrigation system.

This has allowed the schools to start teaching children about food in a completely different way to the traditional approach. As part of the project, the schools have opened up their edible playground to others.

The impact

During the programme, more than 380 staff in 80 schools received training, around two-thirds of the total schools in the borough.

The three flagship schools worked with 40 schools directly. One of the goals of the programme was to improve school meal uptake and that was achieved at all levels of primary school.

At key stage one, uptake rose from 81 per cent to 85 per cent, while at key stage two it went up from 53 per cent to 65 per cent.

Amber Vijayaratnam, from Rockmount Primary, one of the flagship schools, said the project has enabled them to transform the food environment. The dining area has been renovated and there are fresh herbs and fruit and vegetables available at tables,

with cards with healthy messages and information on them. “We believe they should be happy and healthy,” she said. “That is how we learn best.”

Rosie Boycott, Chair of the London Food Board, is also full of praise: “Croydon has made fantastic progress with helping residents to improve their lifestyles and fight ill-health. More children are now eating healthier school meals, and residents have really welcomed opportunities to boost their cooking skills and grow their own fruit, vegetables and herbs.

“I now hope that more schools around the country will adopt Croydon’s model of having a food improvement officer in place to support schools with this area of teaching.”

Lessons learned

An evaluation of the two-year programme flagged up two key areas of learning.

The first was the importance of getting positive engagement from councillors, the health and wellbeing board, senior leaders and other departments.

Ms Flanagan said: “Engagement was sometimes challenging for us as priorities differ across different departments. But it is so important.” The second area of learning was that change takes time so realistic targets are needed as well as a long-term strategy.

“A key part of our approach was that it would not end after two years,” said Ms Flanagan. “We always wanted to create something that was sustainable and not just run something for two years that would be taken away.”

How is the approach being sustained?

When the Mayor of London’s funding came to an end in 2017, Rachel Flowers, Croydon’s Director of Public Health, made an active decision to use the public health budget to continue the funding of Ms Flanagan’s post on a permanent basis, provide additional funding and continued public health specialist time into the continuation of this excellent work.

Another four schools have now become flagship schools and received grants to develop projects ranging from a community café to a new family cookery kitchen, while the borough-wide training programme for all school staff has continued.

Since the pilot ended, another 193 members of school staff have completed training and a number of new projects have been established.

But the council is also looking to build on what has been done by extending the support to early years settings, offering training around healthy eating and menu development.

The Daily Mile initiative is also being introduced into schools, while the council has just signed up to the Local Government Declaration on Sugar Reduction and launched the Sugar Smart Croydon campaign.

It will see the council work with the local NHS, businesses, schools and early years providers to cut down on the amount of sugary food and drink they serve.

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10. Essex and Braintree Councils: County and district working together

Essex County Council and one of the districts, Braintree, are working together on a community-based obesity project. It has placed schools at the heart of the work, but also involved local businesses, planners, the leisure provider and dentists working together with public health.

The challenge

Essex County Council has a strong track record when it comes to encouraging healthy lifestyles and tackling child obesity.

It has been running a healthy schools programme since 2000 with 100 per cent of schools engaged in some areas of the county.

The council also hosts Active Essex, the county's successful sports partnership, which allows the integration of physical activity into healthy living programmes.

Meanwhile, there is a well-recognised health and wellbeing promotion campaign called Livewell Essex that works in communities to encourage people to adopt healthier lifestyles. But Essex Public Health Director Dr Mike Gogarty decided he wanted to try something different. Inspired by the Epode scheme in France, which takes a whole-system approach to obesity, he and his colleagues started to think about a more community-wide approach.

The solution

A pilot programme aimed at the whole community – from schools and parents to businesses and the voluntary sector – was launched in January 2017.

The project, named Livewell Child to capitalise on the branding of the established Livewell programme, has been led by

Braintree District Council and fully supported by leaders and senior corporate management at both councils.

It has placed the school community at the heart of the system. To start with, 10 primary schools out of the 50 in the district were invited to take part and have since been given support to introduce a number of measures. These measures are coordinated and monitored through the Essex Healthy Schools Framework.

These include:

- the introduction of the Daily Mile programme that has seen pupils taking part in organised walking and running during lunchtime and breaks
- a Let's Get Cooking programme that has seen school staff taught to deliver healthy cooking lessons to children and parents
- the local leisure provider brought in to deliver Active Hearts sessions in school, detailing the importance of heart health and the type of food you need to eat
- a dentist recruited to offer good oral hygiene advice in schools
- support to introduce a whole school food policy to ensure good practices are followed in both the school menu and approach to packed lunches.

This help has been accompanied by partnership work with local businesses, including shops and supermarkets that is seeing them re-think the promotion of unhealthy foods, while the planning department has been looking to place restrictions on the opening of fast food takeaways.

Braintree Health and Wellbeing Programme Manager John Krischock said: “It’s about making the most of the services and programmes that are already available. We wanted to design something that did not require lots of upfront investment, so we have built on existing programmes. But by bringing it all together in a concentrated way around these schools, we hope to make a real difference.”

The impact

It is still early days, but already there are encouraging signs. One of the most positive is that the schools that have signed up have remained fully involved and enthusiastic throughout, while growing numbers of businesses from the supermarket giants such as Tesco and Sainsbury’s to local food stores are signing up.

But perhaps the best indication of how well it is working comes from those on the front-line – the head teachers.

One school head said the initiative represents the best chance to really make a difference to obesity. “Other initiatives may make a little bit of impact here or there but if we take the whole-system approach and really focus on and gear up all those different partners, whether it’s businesses, schools, the health system, then we are going to make a difference to childhood obesity.”

As the scheme is rolled out, a full evaluation of the programme will be carried out.

Lessons learned

The programme has employed what is being called a “feedback learning loop”. This involves actively encouraging feedback and acting on it all the time to improve the programme.

Mr Krischock said: “Communication is a key area of learning and improvements from feedback include regular newsletters to stakeholders and stakeholder workshops every few months to find out what schools think and what needs to change.

“One of the recent issues of feedback is that schools struggle to incorporate some of the topics into the curriculum so we are developing advice about what simple things you could do in the classroom, such as knife skills.”

How is the approach being sustained?

The two councils are giving thought to how the project should be targeted in the future – it is being run as a three-year pilot. As part of the initiative, there are plans to extend the national child measurement programme to other years beyond the traditional reception and year six cohorts that normally take part.

Mr Krischock said: “We know one in five children start school obese and by the time they leave there is one in three. But we don’t know what happens in between. If we did we might decide it is better to use more targeted interventions around one key stage group in school. Building up that sort of picture is going to be vital.”

Consideration is also being given to expanding the project beyond the 10 schools taking part in Braintree, while other district councils in Essex have also expressed an interest in launching their own versions of Livewell Child.

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11. Gateshead Council: Getting tough on takeaways

Gateshead Council has introduced tough new planning restrictions that allow officers to turn down applications for new takeaway shops in areas with high levels of obesity, a large number of takeaways or close to schools and leisure centres. Since it was introduced three years ago no rejected application has been overturned.

The challenge

Obesity rates have been rising in Gateshead. Currently 22 per cent of year six children are obese. Diet is considered as an important element to controlling weight and work by the council's environmental health team had identified takeaways as a key source of unhealthy food. One outlet was found to be selling pizzas containing two and a half of a woman's recommended intake of saturated fat.

It also became apparent that the area had more takeaways than most places.

In total Gateshead has an average of 0.97 hot food takeaways per 1,000 people, which exceeds the national average of 0.78 per 1,000 people, and in many wards the figure is considerably higher.

The solution

As part of a broader strategy designed to address obesity, Gateshead decided it wanted to use the planning system as a tool for improving the health of local people.

In 2015 it agreed a hot food takeaway supplementary planning document (SPD) to start restricting the opening of new outlets in areas with high numbers. The SPD ensures that the council can go beyond the traditional planning considerations by taking local people's health into account.

It stipulates that planning permission for new hot food takeaways will be refused:

- in wards where children's obesity levels in year six exceed 10 per cent
- where there are a higher proportion of hot food takeaways per head of population than the national average
- within 400m of the entry point of schools, parks, youth centres and leisure centres.

Gateshead Director of Public Health Alice Wiseman said: "We wanted to make it easier for people to make healthy choices in their diets – but this is much harder if there is a proliferation of hot food takeaways where they live. This is particularly difficult in areas of relative poverty where we have seen a marked increase in the number of takeaways in recent years. You find they start competing on price and buying food from them becomes the easy option when you have families to feed."

The impact

Since its introduction, Gateshead's SPD has resulted in every planning application for a hot food takeaway being refused with those decisions which were subsequently appealed, being upheld by the planning inspectorate.

The initiative has gained a lot of national attention and in 2017 won a Local Government Chronicle award in the public health category.

Councillor Mary Foy, the council's Cabinet Member for Health, said: "It shows the benefits of working together. Three different departments – environmental health, planning and public health – had to come together to make this work and the skills which each

of those groups brought to the table have ensured that we have created something that could make a real difference to millions of lives.”

Lessons learned

Ms Wiseman said one of the key elements of Gateshead’s success is that the council officers had the backing of members. “You need that,” she said. “Tackling obesity is not just a job for public health – it requires the combined effort of everyone. But to start using the planning system, it is important that you get members on board. That they understand what you are trying to do and support it.”

But as well as cracking down on new takeaways, Gateshead has also looked to work with the existing ones. An environmental health post has been funded to liaise directly with takeaways in an attempt to get them to adopt better practices by using healthier ingredients and ways of cooking the food.

“I think it is important to show that you are there helping as well as taking a tough line,” added Ms Wiseman.

How is the approach being sustained?

Ms Wiseman said: “We recognise using the planning system is just one step in the fight against obesity. It will, of course, not solve it on its own so we are looking at what else we can do. One of the big issues is the accessibility and affordability of healthy food and making it easier to live healthy lives.

“We are now working in one of our most deprived neighbourhoods in East Gateshead to see how we can develop a whole community approach – with the schools, local business and community groups.”

A researcher has been funded to work with the community and develop ideas.

Ms Wiseman said: “Parents have told us that they don’t want their children to end up obese and overweight like them and we have been finding out what the barriers and problems are. For example, a number of parents have

said they would like their children to be able to walk to school but it is too busy to allow that. We want to work with them to develop practical solutions.”

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12. Gloucestershire: Getting pupils doing the daily mile

Gloucestershire has sought to capitalise on the Daily Mile movement to get school pupils active. It has promoted the initiative throughout the county and now has over a third of primary schools taking part.

The challenge

In an era when children are increasingly being driven to school, helping them build physical activity into their daily life can be difficult. But one such scheme that has done that is the Daily Mile movement. It is an idea that originated at a school in Stirling in Scotland and has spread to others across the UK.

It is based around the concept of getting primary school kids out walking or running for 15 minutes a day during classes. In 2016, a handful of schools in Gloucestershire started giving it try and found it effective.

A project team bringing together Active Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group, Gloucestershire County Council and Cheltenham Racecourse decided to try to expand its reach in 2017 and get children active. Research suggests 40 per cent are doing less than one hour of proper exercise a day.

The solution

Active Gloucestershire has led the initiative, working closely with schools to get them on board, while the school games mascot, Old Spot, has also been enlisted to promote the scheme to children and parents.

To encourage participation, Active Gloucestershire marketed it as a virtual tour around Europe, with the participation of pupils tracked online so every mile done counts towards the school's progress.

Schools with under 150 pupils were given a 3,300-mile circuit taking in Spain, France, Italy and central Europe, while larger schools have to complete a 7,100-mile course taking in Croatia, Greece and Denmark as well. "The beauty of it is that it is such a simple concept," said Tom Hall, Active Gloucestershire's physical activity specialist for education, who has been in charge of organising the programme. "We could have tried to invent our own scheme, but sometimes there is no need.

"We talked to the schools who were already involved and realised it was something we could support others to take up so that is what we have done. I have been delighted with the response.

"What is really nice is that it is not competitive – it is fun and inclusive – so children of all abilities are taking part. We leave it up to schools how they organise it but just provide support around making it fun and accessible for all students and especially those who are less active. Some do it at the start of the day, but it seems to work best when it is left up to teachers. They can decide when to take the children out, if they are flagging or losing concentration, they take them outside and get them running.

"At first some teachers were concerned it could disrupt work but in fact they are now reporting that they have seen the concentration levels of students improve as a result of an active break."

The impact

There has been a hugely positive response across the county. The campaign kicked off at the start of the 2017 summer term and involved 12,000 pupils at over 60 schools, a quarter of the total in the county.

One of the schools that has got involved is Twynning School in Tewkesbury.

PE Co-ordinator Jo Leggett said it has far-reaching benefits. “The evidence is strong that health improves, but they do better in class. It helps them concentrate.

“It can also improve mental health and as we know, there is a lot of evidence to show that children’s mental health is getting worse as they spend more time in front of their screens.”

Mark Bacon, Head Teacher of Churchdown Village School, said teachers tell him the same. “We had one teacher who was a bit apprehensive at the start because of the potential for it to disrupt the class, but afterwards she said it really helped in terms of their resilience and attitude to work.

“The thing is it is really fun time. Children get active, but when they do they are chatting or skipping, I’ve even seen them learning French and teachers cartwheeling.”

Lessons learned

Mr Hall said one of the most important things to do when running this sort of campaign is to work in partnership with others. “The success of the daily mile campaign in Gloucestershire has really been the result of a whole-system approach to tackling inactivity. We’ve worked closely with our NHS and public health teams to ensure there are simple, consistent messages for schools.

“We have been able to target schools where activity levels are low through the county online pupil survey, and Gloucestershire Healthy Living and Learning have used the Daily Mile as a health and wellbeing intervention.”

He said it is also essential to co-design approaches with schools. “They have told us that you have to make it as easy as possible for them to take part. Therefore we have designed a 2018 challenge so each form can easily track their progress and see how others are doing.

“There is a lot of fun involved and there are certificates and stickers available for those

pupils who improve the most. There are milestones along the way to keep students motivated, which also provide opportunities for teachers to integrate history, geography and other parts of the curriculum.”

How is the approach being sustained?

The Daily Mile campaign is being repeated again in 2018, this time focussing on an 874-mile trail spanning the British Isles. It launched in March and has more than 100 schools involved, well over a third of all schools.

The team is hoping they will eventually embed regular, daily activity into the school day of every primary school.

To help improve participation, Facebook and Twitter campaigns are being set up to sit alongside the website resources. The project team has set up a website that includes information about the campaign and free resource packs. The activity levels are simple to log and Mr Hall has worked with head teachers and governors from schools already participating in the Daily Mile to showcase some of the positive outcomes.

Active Gloucestershire are developing an orienteering activity pack with North Cotswold Orienteering Club so schools are able to use their Daily Mile for cross-curricular benefits. Councillor Tim Harman, Gloucestershire’s Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities, said: “This is a really exciting campaign with incredible health benefits for the county’s young people. The Daily Mile challenge is the perfect opportunity for schools and pupils to participate in a fun and engaging activity that will positively impact on children’s health. I look forward to seeing many of our schools going the extra mile to get involved.”

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13. Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea: Tackling obesity on a super local level

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has sought to tackle obesity on a super local level by running a campaign in one of its most deprived wards. The scheme – Go Golborne – has involved working with schools and community groups and already the early results suggest it is having an impact.

The challenge

Although overall levels of childhood obesity across the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea are below the London and England averages, children living in the least affluent areas of the borough are over four times more likely to be above a healthy weight than their peers in more affluent areas.

Golborne in the north of the borough is one such place. It is the eighth most deprived ward out of the 628 in London and as such has high levels of children above a healthy weight.

But tackling obesity in small areas like Golborne, which has 8,500 residents, is tricky with no effective model to be found. Not only does a promising intervention require the promotion of healthy lifestyle messages, but it also needs to successfully mobilise entire communities to participate and own the issue and help to introduce interventions that make it easier for local people to make healthier choices.

The solution

The council set about creating an innovative community-based programme four years ago after carrying out a review that highlighted the need for more systematic preventative strategies alongside investment in treatment.

The programme – Go Golborne – was launched in 2015 and runs until the summer of 2018.

It is based around themed campaigns – five-a-day, active play, active travel and sugar reduction – and is run by a Project Co-ordinator, Senior Public Health Officer Ellie Lewis.

The programme focuses on supporting healthy eating and physical activity among children aged four to 16 in all the settings in which they live, learn and play.

To achieve that, it has worked closely with the whole community. The six local primary schools have all signed up to take part in the programme and have hosted themed assemblies and after school activities, such as healthy snack stalls.

Children's centres, faith groups, leisure centres and voluntary sector bodies have also been involved with key representatives offered training in healthy lifestyle promotion and support to make positive changes to policy and practice in their settings.

The programme has also focussed on providing accessible, trusted information. There is a dedicated programme website, digital materials, toolkits and animated videos.

Community events, such as fun days and outdoor parties have been organised. As part of the active play theme, an 'Unplug and Play Festival' was held in the local park on the last day of school to promote the activities taking place locally during the summer and encourage children to limit the amount of time spent on screens.

The area's adventure playground has also contributed by organising sugar smart-themed health promotion sessions including a scavenger hunt, playground games and cooking workshops.

Children's Services Manager Patrina Quashie-Ferguson said: "We work with hundreds of children and were concerned about the amount of sugary food and drink they were bringing to the playground. The changes we have made are making it easier for children to make healthy choices and encouraging them to have similar expectations about what they can eat and drink here as they do at school."

Partners have also been encouraged to sign up to pledges. For example, the local leisure service has installed sugar smart stickers on vending machines and reviewed its café menu to ensure it was following good practice guidance.

Meanwhile, small grants have been used to help encourage healthy lifestyles. For example, the local mosque was given funding to install a bike shed to encourage active travel.

Impact

The University of Kent is in the process of evaluating the programme. Early results suggest it is having an impact.

More than 60 representatives from partner bodies have taken part in training and a survey of partners found 81 per cent felt they had developed new skills or knowledge around supporting families to live more healthily.

There were also small, but welcome improvements in the lifestyles of local children when comparing 2016 and 2017:

- active travel to school – either on foot or bike – increased from 50.2 per cent in 2016 to 53.0 per cent in 2017
- the proportion of children engaged in no active play during school decreased from 8.2 per cent to 5.7 per cent
- the percentage of children who drank at least one healthy drink – water or milk – a day increased from 59.1 per cent to 79.5 per cent
- the proportion of children eating fast food more than once a week fell from 10.9 per cent to 8.9 per cent.

There were, however, small increases in the amount of screen time children had and a small decrease in fruit and vegetable consumption. The report noted though that these were both part of national trends.

"It is still early days, but there are encouraging signs," said Ms Lewis. "Families have really got involved. We have tried to make the events fun and accessible to engage people. There is a really good momentum to the programme now. Every few months, we got all the partners together to plan and gather feedback so we can look to improve the way it is working all the time."

Lessons learned

Ms Lewis said it is important to work with the assets that already exist when running community-based programmes like Go Golborne. "There can be quite a lot of support and services already out there and sometimes it is about making the most of those rather than setting things up from scratch.

"For example, for the training we did a bespoke piece for the Sugar Smart theme, but for the others we used an organisation that was already used by the council. The sustainable travel team worked with us to promote the active travel 'Pedal and Stride' campaign and we have relied heavily on the Change4Life information and materials. You don't need to invent everything from scratch."

How is the approach being sustained?

The programme has entered its final year, but there are still lots of activities and initiatives planned. The Unplug and Play festival is going to be repeated at the end of the summer term, while Living Streets is carrying out an assessment of the walkability of the area. This could lead to improvements such as better signage, lighting and crossing points being introduced to encourage people to walk more.

A training course on organised walking is also going to be arranged.

When the three-year programme is completed in the summer, a full evaluation report will follow. The council will then decide how to proceed and whether the approach should be rolled out elsewhere.

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14. Lambeth Council: Training front-line staff en masse in health lifestyle interventions

Lambeth Council runs an ambitious training programme that is equipping front-line staff who have the most contact with children from health visitors and school nurses to GPs and children's centre staff with the skills and knowledge to encourage healthy lifestyles.

The challenge

Like other inner London boroughs with areas of high deprivation, Lambeth has above average rates of child obesity. About one in 10 children is obese in reception, rising to just under one in four in year 6.

The borough's public health team has approached this challenge by developing a healthy weight programme that includes prevention, support for families and children and other wider policy measures.

One of the key steps has involved working closely with front-line staff who have most contact with children, such as health visitors, school nurses, GPs, practice nurses, child-minders and community workers, such as children's centre staff.

Lambeth Council Public Health Consultant Bimpe Oki said: "I think traditionally the main concern for practitioners used to be infants and toddlers being underweight or failing to thrive, which meant those who were overweight were almost overlooked."

The solution

Over five years ago, Lambeth started to develop and implement its healthy weight programme. An important part of it was funding training for local front-line staff on how to identify, raise and refer children with weight problems for appropriate support.

The training is delivered through half-day workshops and is aimed at all those who have contact with children under the age of 11.

Afterwards they are given practical tools and resources, such as a BMI wheel and visuals that can be used with families. Food workers linked to children's centres have also run cook-and-eat sessions to give parents and staff ideas on how to provide tasty, healthy snacks and meals on a budget.

A bespoke version of the training has been offered to school staff, including head teachers and governors, which has taught them how to communicate healthy lifestyle messages effectively.

The training helps them to understand what food policies should look like and the use of online health resources in lessons, such as how weights, measures and calories can be part of maths teaching.

Ms Oki said: "We wanted to do something to make sure everyone working with children and families understood the importance of a healthy weight and how to broach the topic and give consistent messages.

"It is in line with the 'every contact counts approach' – only by making sure we make the most of every opportunity will we be able to tackle this problem."

The impact

More than 1,000 front-line staff have completed the training, while 400 school staff and governors have been through that element of the programme. Feedback from those who have taken part has been extremely positive. Some 82 per cent say the workshops have "fully achieved" the

objectives, while 78 per cent reported they had, on their return to work, instigated more dialogues about weight.

A children's centre manager who took part said: "I found the workshops very intuitive and I believe anyone working with children and their families who come across issues regarding healthy weight will find this workshop useful."

Meanwhile, one head teacher who was involved said it has proved "invaluable". They say afterwards they worked with the dietician, deputy head of school and sport manager to do a workshop on healthy eating with parents.

It has also helped Lambeth make progress in reducing child obesity. It is one of only a handful of areas in England that has seen a statistically significant reduction in child obesity rates in recent years.

Lessons learned

The success seen in Lambeth cannot be just put down to the training, said Ms Oki.

"Co-ordinated effort is being made at individual, community and borough levels, addressing social and environmental influences."

For example, schools are also supported via a specialist healthy weight school nurse who proactively follows up overweight and obese children identified in the National Child Measurement Programme.

The nurse also works closely with and refers families to appropriate services including the local weight management service.

There are other local programmes such as a scheme that encourages children and their families to get involved with nature, with healthy food as the main component.

These activities have also helped children to develop skills such as team building, sharing ideas, problem solving, creativity and self-awareness.

But when it comes to the training workshops, Ms Oki said one of the key messages that has been fed back is the importance of doing the

training on a multi-agency level. "We have run bespoke training for GPs, schools and others. Sometimes it is because of time constraints and we have built it into forums, gatherings and conferences they have been at.

"But whenever we do the multi-agency training with a variety of attendees, it is clear how useful they find it. Being able to make those links and gain understanding about each other's role in the obesity agenda is a really valuable experience."

How is the approach being sustained?

The workshops are continuing with training being offered to more than 250 new people per year. As part of that, Lambeth is having a specific push on those who work with the zero to four-year-old age group.

"We have had really great progress in the past few years," said Ms Oki. "Staff feel more confident bringing these issues up in conversation and know where they can signpost people for help.

"But we really want to make sure we further support parents with really young children, as establishing positive health behaviour early in life is important. So we are doing something that is tailored to those working in the early years settings, looking at how you introduce solids, breast-feeding, dealing with fussy eaters and ensuring those eligible can effectively make use of the national Healthy Start vouchers."

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15. Leeds City Council: Getting children active through dance

Leeds City Council has worked with a local dance charity to get children active. Over 100 different classes are run each week in schools and across the community. They are free or heavily subsidised and have proven to be effective at reaching out to the least active and most deprived groups.

The challenge

It is recommended that children do 60 minutes of physical activity every day through a combination of moderate and vigorous activities that strengthen the bones and muscles.

Sports such as football, rugby, athletics and netball are all examples of vigorous activity that are popular for school-aged children. But not everyone enjoys them. In Leeds, the council has sought to encourage young people to get involved in dance as an alternative option to these traditional pursuits.

The solution

The council has been working with a local charity, Dance Action Zone Leeds (DAZL), for the past decade to provide opportunities for children and young people aged three to 19 to get active through dance.

Public health funding combined with other grants and charitable donations allows the charity to run free and heavily subsidised classes in the community and in schools – the most people are charged is £2 for the sessions.

These cover a whole host of dance styles from street dance and cheer dance to hip-hop and breakdance.

The classes also accept referrals from the weight management service. Leeds Public Health Improvement Specialist Deb Lowe

said: “There are many children who are not necessarily interested in those traditional sports. They may get put off them at school and that can mean they become inactive. We feel dance is a great alternative. It is great exercise, great fun and can be good for building confidence.

“So by working with DAZL we have tried to create opportunities for everyone. Unlike a lot of private dance schools, which can be quite expensive, the aim of DAZL has been to be really inclusive and get everyone involved.”

To help ensure that happens, DAZL has made sure there is something for everyone with the classes it runs. There are over 100 different classes each week with a particular focus on delivering them in the most deprived areas.

These include an elite squad that enters competitions, specially-tailored classes for people with disabilities, including a cheer dance project for young people aged 14 to 24 with severe learning difficulties, and a whole range of community classes, including DAZL Ignite, which is for those who have been referred by the weight management service.

There is also a programme aimed at boys – DAZL boasts the UK’s only all-male cheer dance squad – as well as an extensive range of school-based sessions.

The work with schools is often targeted at clusters with the highest rates of obesity.

Ms Lowe said: “We use the data from the national child measurement programme to help us identify where best to target the support. Once we identify places we work with DAZL to offer dance opportunities.”

The impact

DAZL works with 4,500 young people every year, over a fifth of which were boys.

Nearly 3,000 of them are classed as inactive, doing less than an hour of physical activity outside of school when they started the programme.

Schools where classes have been held are full of praise. Jill Midgley, Head Teacher of Corpus Christi Primary School, said she would “highly recommend” the work DAZL do. “The children are always really enthusiastic, they have lots of fun, learn new skills and grow in confidence.” Cath Storey, of Low Road Primary School, said the children at her school “absolutely love these sessions”.

Lessons learned

One of the things that marks DAZL’s approach out is that the classes do not just focus on dance, the importance of healthy eating is also incorporated into them.

DAZL founder Ian Rodley said: “It’s a great opportunity to think about healthy lifestyles more generally. But you can’t just start talking about portion size – they would just not listen to that.

“What we do is incorporate elements into the classes. We may use the Eatwell Guide and encourage people to get into the shapes of food to represent a balance diet. We also talk about what we need to fuel our bodies to become strong dancers.’

Mr Rodley said they also think about what snacks children and young people are consuming while they are at class.

“We have sliced up fruit for them to eat and we have banned high-energy drinks, encouraging them to drink water instead.”

How is the approach being sustained?

DAZL is looking to build on its work with children and young people by offering sessions to parents thanks to funding from Sport England.

The classes are being badged as dance fitness and take place at the same time as the children’s classes to avoid the need for childcare to be arranged.

Pilot sessions were run last year and proved successful so DAZL is now setting up six adult sessions each week. Mr Rodley said: “There can be a tendency for parents to just drop children and pick them up at the end. But there’s actually an opportunity there to get them involved and active. It is working really well.”

DAZL is not the only ‘alternative’ physical activity programme the council funds.

Public health money has recently been provided to the Works Skatepark, a 25,000 square foot indoor arena that caters for skateboard, BMX and inline skating.

The money allows the Works Skatepark to work with children who have poor attendance at school. As well as skating, they offer healthy eating lessons in their café.

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16. Liverpool City Council: Taking on the food industry on sugar

Liverpool City Council has taken the bold step and taken on the commercial world by officially naming and shaming brands with high sugar content. The council's campaign has had a major impact with two-thirds of parents saying it has helped them change their behaviour.

The challenge

The Government now recommends that no more than 5 per cent of our daily calories should come from sugar. This means that children consume three times more sugar than they should, most of which comes from sugary drinks and breakfast cereals.

But getting parents to change their shopping habits is difficult. Research carried out by an independent agency for Liverpool City Council's public health team found parents were left bewildered by many of the nutritional labels on food and a lack of knowledge about exactly which products were high in sugar.

The research – based on consultation with focus groups – was worrying. Liverpool has high rates of child obesity – 38 per cent of 10 and 11-year-olds are classed as overweight or obese – while decayed teeth is the leading cause of hospital admissions for children.

The solution

The council decided to launch its own sugar reduction campaign aimed at parents and children aged four to 11.

Save Kids from Sugar started in the summer of 2017 and became the first campaign in the country to officially give information on the sugar content of branded drinks and breakfast cereals from a local government source.

Sue Cumming, the council's Head of Behavioural Insight and Change, said: "We took the bold step to name brands as we

found that people in Liverpool were more likely to act on information when they can see the amount of sugar in drinks and cereals that they consume."

She admits it did require "extensive legal advice", but the public health team was given the green light as the information was already in the public domain and was included on the food and drinks labels.

The council, she said, was just presenting it in a more user-friendly and impactful way. The campaign categorised branded and supermarket-own cereals into high, medium and low sugar categories. It also showed how many sugar cubes were in an average 40g bowl alongside the maximum daily allowance as well as giving tips about how to sweeten low-sugar versions.

On drinks, the campaign's key message was that water and milk are the healthiest options and it showed the sugar-cube content of a range of drinks, including Pepsi, Fanta, Coca Cola and Ribena.

To help parents see how much sugar their child was having each day, the campaign included a sugar check tool on the website.

The information was distributed in leaflets, posters and adverts on social media and via hard copies placed in public service settings, such as dentists, GPs, hospitals and children's centres.

Schools also embraced the campaign and used the messages as part of a PHSE lesson plans, while supermarkets allowed the public health team to set up information stalls and hand out cards with shopping tips in their foyers.

Impact

The campaign ran for three months from June 2017 and had significant reach.

The website had over 33,000 hits and the YouTube animations have been viewed over 105,000 times and the digital ads reached over 5 million people.

A total of 8,500 people have completed the sugar checker tool and it is estimated over 3,000 parents received information at the events at supermarkets.

A representative survey of 310 parents carried out after the campaign found:

- 65 per cent recalled seeing the campaign
- 77 per cent were surprised by how much sugar was in cereals
- 71 per cent were concerned about the sugar their children were consuming
- 67 per cent of those who recognised the campaign said they did make a change because of it.

The take-up by schools has also been impressive. More than 40 are using the campaign resources, reaching over 10,000 children.

The approach by the council has also received the back of health officials.

Local dentist Stuart Garton said he is “really encouraged” by the council’s commitment to the health of children. “When you are seeing children of just three and four with up to eight or nine decayed teeth, it has to be because of the amount of sugar in their diet and it is very sad to see.”

Lessons learned

One of the things that has characterised Liverpool’s approach is careful testing.

Ahead of the official launch, the council did some “soft testing” by erecting displays in some of the public settings to gauge the reaction of the public.

The ideas have also been developed in partnership with parents through the focus

groups. This has been done to ensure the council got the messaging right with the emphasis on providing usable and influential information rather than lecturing parents.

Councillor Tim Beaumont, Mayoral Lead for Wellbeing, said this is key. “It is all about letting parents know small changes can have a big impact. As a dad of four, I am very aware of the minefield of sugary food targeted at children that parents have to cope with.

“There is a balance to be had so you don’t have to feel like a killjoy. The last thing we want is for parents to feel judged or guilty. The aim of the campaign is to increase awareness of where sugar can crop up in food and to let parents know there is help available to make positive choices.”

How is the approach being sustained?

While the advertising campaign ran for three months, the website and work in schools has continued.

The council though is now preparing for a new advertising campaign, this time focussing on yoghurt.

Research shows parents are giving their children yoghurt in the belief it is a healthy snack. Some is low in sugar, but there are plenty of yoghurts that are high in sugar and because of this, many are still consuming over the recommended daily guidelines.

This phase of the campaign is expected to get under way in early summer and will include an advertising campaign similar to the one carried out with drinks and cereals.

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17. Luton Borough Council: Making early years settings healthier

Luton Borough Council runs a project that works with early years staff to improve their knowledge of diet and nutrition and help them feel confident and knowledgeable in talking to and advising parents on the issue.

The challenge

In Luton, levels of tooth decay are well above the national average for reception aged children.

A similar picture emerges when it comes to weight. Some 21 per cent of four to five-year-olds are either overweight or obese.

One of the major factors in this is likely to be the high levels of deprivation in the borough. More than 10,000 children live in poverty, according to Public Health England figures, 22 per cent of the total. Luton decided it needed to do something to reach out to those children in the most deprived areas.

The solution

The Family Food First project was launched in 2014, building on the work done as part of the Healthy Under 5s programme.

It runs in nurseries, pre-schools and children's centres in the most deprived neighbourhoods and is part of Luton's early years strategy, Flying Start.

Early years providers are encouraged to sign up to a set of standards that are designed to create healthier environments for children and to make early years professionals more knowledgeable and confident in discussing healthy lifestyle messages, including good oral health, with families.

A team of public health dietitians and nutritionists from Cambridge Community

Services are employed to support the early years settings.

The standards require:

- implementation of a nutrition and health policy
- having at least half of staff trained in basic knowledge about infant feeding, healthy eating, physical activity and oral health
- offering children and babies healthy meals and snacks
- promoting healthy lifestyle messages throughout the year
- holding one event where healthy messages are promoted to the wider community
- working with families.

The team carry out audits to observe practice and support the settings by providing supporting materials, online resources and training. Once they have achieved the standards, settings are then placed on a maintenance programme where ongoing support and training is provided.

Luton's Flying Start Diet and Nutrition Lead Louise Morrissey said: "The aim is to create a healthy environment in all our settings.

"The early years are a crucial time for both parents and their children – and if we can develop healthy food preferences and eating habits from the start, the chances are they will stay with them for life.

"We want our early years providers to offer healthy food and opportunities for active play, but it is also about setting an example. They can set up information boards or run sugar reduction workshops. We want to see them actively engaging with parents and carers."

The impact

So far 10 settings have achieved the standards with another 16 going through the process. That is nearly a third of the early years venues in Luton. Those who have completed the training are full of praise, describing it as “very informative” and saying it gives them the “confidence in giving parents correct facts”.

And, according to the latest quarterly monitoring, 97 per cent of staff who completed training say they have a good knowledge of healthy lifestyle behaviours and 91 per cent felt confident in supporting families.

It has also had an impact on day-to-day practices. For example, one manager at a nursery noticed at pick up time parents were giving children unhealthy snacks. Therefore, the manager decided to start Fruity Friday. She collects fruit provided from a supermarket at a discounted price and hands them out to kids at the end of the day. Meanwhile, others report they have persuaded parents to walk to nursery with their children and tackled them about unhealthy packed lunches.

Lessons learned

The standards have been designed not to be easy to ensure the very best practices are developed. Accreditation can take between six and 12 months alone to achieve.

“We did that on purpose,” said Ms Morrissey. “We didn’t want it to become a tick-box exercise. We wanted to challenge providers to make changes.” But this approach has meant engaging settings to achieve the accreditation can sometimes be difficult.

One of the sticking points for some is the requirement that cake is not eaten – even on birthdays. Ms Morrissey said: “Some places have not liked that, but the point is that we are trying to change the culture around this. With 30 or 40 children you can be having cake once a week.

“Instead, we have been encouraging providers to think about different ways to

celebrate birthdays, such as making a crown.”

How is the approach being sustained?

With the Family Food First project now fully established, the council is starting to turn its attention on the wider food environment.

It has signed up to Sustain’s Sustainable Food Cities movement and work will be undertaken to encourage local takeaways and eateries to sell healthier food.

The council is also aiming to take a lead by improving the food available in staff canteens and local leisure centres.

“The work with early years providers is really making a difference. But we know there is more that can be done to improve the wider environment where children and adults are exposed to foods that make choosing healthier choices challenging,” added Ms Morrissey.

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18. Nottinghamshire: Getting the planning system to prioritise health

Nottinghamshire County Council has drawn up a planning and health protocol to ensure health is a key consideration in planning decisions made by both the county and district and borough councils.

The challenge

It is acknowledged that the environment in which we are born, grow, live, work and play is a major determinant of our health and wellbeing.

Housing quality, air pollution, road infrastructure, access to green space and walk-ability of neighbourhoods, along with many other social and environmental factors, contribute directly to good health and wellbeing.

The ability to access appropriate healthcare facilities and services when ill is also a key requirement.

In Nottinghamshire the role that planning can play was identified as part of the intervention mix for addressing obesity in the county's 2014 health and wellbeing strategy.

But ensuring that happens is not an easy task. As a two-tier area, planning responsibilities are divided between the county and seven district and borough councils.

There are also a variety of health partners to consider from the county public health team and the six local clinical commissioning groups to the local estates forums and NHS England that both make decisions on NHS buildings.

The solution

Following the 2014 health and wellbeing strategy, the county council's public health and planning teams worked in partnership

with the district and borough planning authorities to produce a document, 'Spatial Planning for the Health and Wellbeing of Nottinghamshire'.

It set out all the health-related planning policies in the county from the joint strategic needs assessments to the health and wellbeing strategy.

It was published in 2015 and was followed in 2017 by a Planning and Health Engagement Protocol setting out the role each partner could play.

The protocol sets out the key steps for both the development of local plans, which planning decisions are based on, and how to proceed with planning applications by taking health into account. For example, it said at the planning pre-application stage public health will supply evidence of the health and wellbeing issues for any development, while the planners are to approach the relevant local estates forum so any health infrastructure considerations are taken into account and establish a key health partners contact list to involve them in the consultation on the development.

As the application goes through the system it sets out key requirements, including whether health considerations need to form part of any section 106 agreements.

Public health completes the health impact assessment checklist to provide comment on all substantial changes and drafts to district planning strategies and plans. For each planning application over 50 dwellings and neighbourhood plans, the public health team prepare a local health profile with recommendations to development managers

on what public health matters they should take into account.

John Wilcox, Senior Public Health and Commissioning Manager at the county council, said: “We know planners have lots of competing priorities from economic development to social housing – and health partners may not always understand the process and the role they can play. These documents help address both and are helping to ensure health is properly considered at all the stages.”

The impact

It is still early days, but already the protocol is having an impact. Broxtowe Borough Council’s local plan, for example, has agreed to incorporate the protocol’s checklist for any residential development of 50 dwellings or more or non-residential developments of 5,000 square metres or more. It also states it will consider the health implications of any new takeaways.

The plan specifically said where significant adverse impact is identified, measures to “substantially mitigate the impact will be required”.

The success of the approach can also be seen in the results of individual applications. For example, the Gedling Colliery, a phased development of over 1,000 dwellings and shops also includes a health centre.

Tracey Tucker, a Senior Planning Policy Officer at Mansfield District Council, said the initiative has had a really big impact in her council. “We are currently working with the public health team to ensure that our emerging local plan does all it can to contribute towards improving the health and wellbeing of Mansfield district’s residents. A health impact assessment is currently being undertaken in accordance with the protocol and we intend to embed any recommendations from this into the plan when finalising our publication draft.”

Lessons learned

Mr Wilcox said the whole process has been a “real learning exercise”.

“The world of planning and public health are different. The language and practices are different and it takes time to develop relationships and understand the processes. Face-to-face contact is essential to do that.” But he also said there are “key similarities” too that can provide the basis for a good working relationship.

“They are both about making changes to improve outcomes for the local community and are about longer term change. A key process is being able to influence the planning strategy and policies so that they impact positively on health improvement and tackling health inequalities.”

How is the approach being sustained?

Planning and health has now been made a specific priority in the county’s 2018-2022 Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

And Nottinghamshire is constantly looking at new ways of incorporating health into planning. For example, the council plans to consider the Sport England and Public Health England active design guidance as part of this process as well as focussing on improving the food environment. But a particular emphasis for the future is how public health can better engage with developers.

The county council took part in the Town and Country Planning Association Developers and Wellbeing project. It involved a series of workshops looking at how developers can be engaged at an earlier stage. “Providing accurate and precise guidance to development managers is key and is something we are working on,” Mr Wilcox added.

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19. Oxfordshire Region: Getting pupils competing in sport

Oxfordshire has one of the most well established school games movements. All secondary schools and most primary schools are involved thanks to a big focus on creating opportunities for non-elite pupils.

The challenge

The School Games movement was launched as part of the attempt to ensure the 2012 London Olympics left a lasting legacy on the country.

The idea is to create opportunities for pupils to be active and enjoy sport. This is something that is backed by Oxfordshire's joint health and wellbeing strategy produced by the county council and local clinical commissioning group. But competing in events from athletics to football is not something every child wants to do.

The solution

Oxfordshire Sport and Physical Activity Partnership (OxSPA) launched its schools programme seven years ago. The body, funded by Sport England, has worked with local partners including schools and the county council to create an established network of school games organisers that are embedded in schools.

The county is split into five districts. The games start early in the academic year with inter-school competitions from which the winners progress to district finals and then finally the county finals which start after Christmas.

Many of the finals congregate around week-long Olympic-style festivals which take place in the spring and summer terms. In recent years, the county finals have started to be

held at the more prestigious venues in the county, such as the major swimming pools and at the big independent schools.

The organisation of the events requires a closer working relationship between OxSPA and school games organisers. OxSPA youth sport manager Josh Lenthall said: "We are lucky to have a fantastic team of organisers to work with, and we try to ensure the format of all competitions is consistent all the way through.

"We have district medal tables so schools can see how they are collectively doing against each other. It sounds pretty simple, but it does require a lot of organising and teamwork from everyone." The organisers are supported by young leaders from local secondary schools and colleges who help organise events, referee matches and marshal runs. More than 4,000 volunteered last year.

Mr Lenthall said: "It would not be possible to run the games on the scale we do without their support. They really get a lot out of it in terms of developing their leadership and organisational skills. But I think what is perhaps even more important is the human skills they gain – empathy, compassion, humour."

The impact

The success of the school games programme can be seen through the uptake among schools.

During the 2016-17 academic year, 95 per cent of primary schools and 100 per cent of secondary schools took part, involving nearly 30,000 participants.

There were 84 different competitions across over 20 sports, including traditional events such as athletics, gymnastics and swimming along with more unusual activities such as angling, rounders and boccia.

Feedback from those who have competed showed that 88 per cent said taking part in sport made them “feel good about themselves” and 80 per cent described sport as a “part of who I am”.

Nikki Farmer, a teacher at Kingfisher School, said taking part in the games was an “excellent experience” for everyone involved – over 100 pupils took part last year.

“They look forward to it each year. I see pupils that are the happiest they have been all year.”

Lessons learned

As the years have gone by, OxSPA has worked hard to make sure the games are as inclusive as possible.

Mr Lenthall said: “We have sought to encourage and support those children who are not engaged in sport or physical activity. There are some events that are specifically aimed at these students, angling and boccia for example, while a Panathlon competition is held for pupils with disabilities.

“In many areas, there is also a level of competition for primary schools leading up to the district finals. They compete in clusters against neighbouring schools and it encourages smaller schools in particular to take part.”

What is more, many of the events are based on teams rather than individuals, encouraging greater participation rates.

For example, tennis is organised in a similar format to the Davis Cup whereby schools compete as teams. A similar approach is taken to gymnastics.

How is the approach being sustained?

The school games programme is now a well-established fixture in the school calendar and this year’s events are well under way.

To build on the inclusive nature of the games, a separate football competition has been set up for pupils who do not normally represent their school.

OxSPA is also introducing a new element to the Summer Festival. Working with the council’s public health team, which support schools with Change4Life events, inactive pupils are being invited to attend Oxfordshire MegaFest.

The event was first run last year but not linked to the school games finals. It gives children the opportunity to try new sports and they take part in healthy eating workshops.

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20. Sheffield City Council: Introducing your own sugar tax

Sheffield City Council supported a move by a local leisure provider to introduce its own tax on sugary drinks. The move encouraged customers to swap to lower sugar alternatives and is now being used by the council as an example of good practice to encourage other organisations to introduce healthier policies.

The challenge

The Government's sugar tax came into force in April 2018, introducing a levy on manufacturers who sell high sugar soft drinks.

But it was, of course, a long time coming. The move had been under discussion for years with health experts arguing it would be an effective way of reducing sugar intake. Back in the autumn of 2015 Public Health England published an evidence review setting out what impact it would have.

The move spiked the interest of leisure group SIV, part of the not-for-profit Sheffield City Trust. "It really made us think," said Robert Womack, SIV's Health, Wellbeing & Partnerships Manager.

"We run a service which is all about helping people to improve their health and wellbeing and yet we could see they were buying these high-sugar drinks that were not good for them.

"We started debating what we could do. We knew these things can take years to introduce – and realised we could act immediately." Following discussions internally and with the Sheffield City Council's public health team in spring 2016, SIV decided to act.

The solution

Several options were considered, including getting rid of the drinks altogether, but SIV decided introducing its own sugar tax was the best approach.

A 20p levy on soft drinks with more than 5 grams of sugar per 100ml came into force in July 2016. It excluded milk-based drinks and fruit juices, as the PHE review recommended.

The tax was introduced in the eight sports and leisure venues SIV runs and applied to both vending machines and cafes. It was decided any money raised would be put into a fund that would then be reinvested into the local community to encourage healthy lifestyles. Stickers were placed on the drinks that were affected – 21 in total.

The impact

The impact of the sugar tax has been evaluated by researchers at Sheffield University in collaboration with SIV and the council.

The review found in the first year after the introduction of the tax sales of high sugar drinks fell by 31 per cent per visit.

The sales of lower sugar alternatives rose by 27 per cent, suggesting that the public did not simply purchase the drinks elsewhere.

This was the equivalent of removing 1.3 million tonnes of sugar from the diet of local people.

Lead researcher Professor Liddy Goyder said: "The 20p price increase seems to have made parents think more about the choices they were making when buying drinks for their children. "It was an effective nudge to encourage people to buy healthier drinks, which makes this local initiative a great example of how small changes can have a significant impact."

That impact also looks set to be further enhanced following the introduction of the Government's sugar levy.

The SIV tax is still in place, but as manufacturers have reformulated their drinks there are now only two drinks stocked by the group that are subject to the 20p tax.

Lessons learned

Mr Womack said one of the key steps which SIV took was training their front-of-house and catering staff in how to communicate messages around sugar to the public.

"We didn't want to shame people who did want to buy the high sugar drinks, but we did want to use it as an opportunity to engage them in a conversation about sugar.

"If someone was buying a high sugar drink we would point out that it had the tax placed on it and there were other alternatives that were lower in sugar.

"We also put posters up explaining what we were doing. We could have just removed the drinks from the venues, but if you deny people choice the risk is they just go elsewhere.

"I think doing it the way we did really allows you to encourage a change in behaviour."

How is the approach being sustained?

The initiative has been fully supported by Sheffield Director of Public Health Greg Fell.

He is now using the success of it to encourage others to follow suit. "It is enabling me to engage with businesses, the NHS and schools to talk about their approaches to high sugar products," Mr Fell said. "This is exactly the sort of approach we should be taking."

"I'd like to be able to do something on the meal deals on offer on the high street, for example, so that low sugar or zero sugar drinks are offered instead of the high sugar ones.

"And there are still too many unhealthy products being sold in shops on NHS premises. There is a lot more we want to do."

The sugar tax has also influenced the formulation of the council's recently published food and wellbeing strategy.

The strategy sets out a vision for everything from making healthier food more affordable to cracking down on takeaways near schools.

But also included is a desire to create a "low-sugar" Sheffield.

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21. Wakefield Council: “We got rid of our child weight management service and invested in prevention instead”

Wakefield Council took the brave decision to decommission its child weight management service and instead put more emphasis on prevention work.

It launched a whole-system project in three neighbourhoods and is now taking the best practice it learned to the rest of the district.

The challenge

Like many areas, Wakefield had a child weight management programme for obese children. But the council had concerns about how effective it was. “It was building dependence,” said Liz Blenkinsop, Wakefield’s Health Improvement Service Manager. “We had some clients who had been on the service three years with no weight loss – it was supposed to be a 12-week programme.

“We decided we had to do something different. We wanted to focus on something much more based around prevention to stop children getting obese.”

The solution

In 2010 the weight management service was decommissioned. This came after Wakefield had launched a whole-system approach known as the Three Area Project (TAP) in areas with high rates of obesity – Eastmoor, Kinsley and Airedale.

TAP ran for three years thanks to £2.5 million of funding from public health, which was supplemented by other grants.

The scheme involved:

- Change4Life road shows, getting people to pledge a health change

- improving play areas, signage for walks and employing ‘activators’ to help set up local physical activity opportunities.
- social enterprises being supported to ensure there was low-cost fruit and vegetables available and cookery sessions were organised
- local takeaways encouraged to provide healthier options and new community cafés set up.

The impact

An evaluation at the end of TAP showed it had made progress. The proportion of people doing moderate levels of activity rose by over a fifth to 34 per cent, while the numbers describing themselves as eating very healthily rose by over half to 16 per cent.

The success of the scheme convinced public health that they should do something similar for the whole of Wakefield. A Change4Life school programme was launched in 2015, which both supports schools but also encourages them to be proactive by analysing data from their own child measurement results along with the school health survey.

Staff are given training, for example lunchtime supervisors can do sessions on how to encourage active play, and children volunteer to be playground play-makers, while schools can choose from a suite of activities from organised health weeks to roller bike sessions.

Schools are awarded gold, silver and bronze awards and so far 48 have got involved. To complement this, Wakefield has experimented by creating interactive ‘health-by-stealth’ walks.

The first was developed at Anglers Country Park in 2015 based around the popular children's book, Room on the Broom.

A two-mile lake walk was set up based on wood-carved characters from the book which were placed around the trail. Activity packs were produced and actors employed to lead walks. Ms Blenkinsop said: "It has been a tremendous success. Previously parents who took their children would just walk 100 metres or so and then go to the café. They didn't think their children could get round the lake. It got so busy the country park even had to open up an additional car park over the summer."

Lessons learned

Ms Blenkinsop said one of the key lessons from the work that has been done is the fact that each community has to be treated differently.

"During the TAP project we had one school that hosted cooking sessions for parents and children. It worked really well. They targeted the parents they felt would need the support and there was really good take-up.

"But that didn't work in other areas so we had to try different approaches. We ran a 'Junior Master Chef-type' competition in one place and that took off. It just goes to show how unique each community is.

"As we have developed our programme, we have always kept in mind that you have to develop local solutions. That is why it is important to get the schools and others to be proactive themselves."

How is the approach being sustained?

Wakefield is continually looking to build on its approach. Following on from the success of the Room on the Broom walk, a gnome walk was created at another country park.

This year a third walk is being launched at another park with an author commissioned to write an individual story based on the theme "blown away" – the park is open to the elements so it is quite windy.

The council is also looking to develop an app for the walks that can be used on smart phones.

Ms Blenkinsop said: "Lots of children have smart phones now so we think it will be a good way to get them engaged in much the same way as Pokémon Go did."

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